THE REACHING HAND

Returning home after a long absence, one naturally expects surprises and changes; but I could not have ever imagined such as I found in my friend Philip Moreland, I had been gone twenty years, and I am well aware how impressions will fade and memory become defective in that length of time; but he was so different from the promise of his early manhood that I at once felt the change to be much more than a warping of my recollection. When we had parted, just after graduating from the same college-he to study law and I to take a promising business post in Australia-he was a healthy, stalwart young man, indomitable, buoyantly aggressive, uncompromisingly ambitious and blessed with talents insuring his success. Calring at his office, I found a shrunken man, old before his time, his hair and beard streaked with gray, and deep lines rudely cut across a waxen forehead. The first glance told me that I beheld a tragedy of noble gifts and aspirations.

Not until I had answered his questions as to my prosperity, and he had told me that his parents were dead, and that, not having married, he lived almost alone in the old homestead, did I speak of his appearance, and beseech him, in the name of our friendship, to tell me what calamity had come to him. He looked at me a few moments, unable to reply, the pupils of his sunken eyes dilating, and pallor forcing its way through the yellow skin. At last he replied, with shaking voice, and concealing the trembling of his hands by tightly pressing them upon the chair arms:

"Yes, John, I will tell you. But you will be the only mortal except myself who knows what has snapped the strings of my energy and purposes. I cannot tell you here, though."

Greatly wondering, I asked: "Where can you tell me?" "Come to the old home to-night at 8

Punctually to the appointed time, I sent solemn echoes of the old-fashioned brass knocker through the wide hall. The house, dating from colonial days, unable to keep with modern improvements, and s cluded from the street amid high poplars and elms, was gloomy enough at all times; but clouds had brought the October night earlier, and the rattie and rustle of the withered leaves, as the wind tore them from the boughs and scurried them across the dead grass, seemed to deepen the dismal quiet of the place; or, in my fancy, excited by apprehension, to be the whispering of the demons of fate and mystery. An aged colored servant, whose hearty voice, as I remember it, had been lowered to a pitch of melancholy, opened the door and bade me go up-stairs.

Philip welcomed me in the study with an air of relief. As he turned up the light, the evident pain in his eyes, and the gratefire, showed me he had been brooding in the dark. An easy rocker, drawn close to his chair, silently revealed his wish that we sit there. I accordingly asked him to turn down the light, which he gladly did, and we sat down before the fire-place.

Anxiously interested in my friend's condition, I fell naturally to analyzing it as reflected by the expression of his face, and I now saw, even in the dim hearth-light, a spark of hope that this first revealment might lessen his grief. "John," he began, "you have noticed that

this is not the same study father used. He, you remember, preferred the room at the top of the house, which looked out over the slanting room of the back building, and commanding the view we have so often, as young men, admired in those happy days. Men of studious habits seem to take instinctively to the house-tops, as if nearness to the ground makes the mind earthy. I, too, liked its solitude, and, after father died, I kept it until-" He stopped suddenly, and the spark in his eyes was quenched by despair. I said nothing, and he went on:

"But I will start at the beginning, and if you can suggest an escape for me you will be more than a friend to me. I'm suffering. John-God help me, how I suffer! You know what prospects I had. I wrote you how I was elected prosecuting attorney. was winning legal triumphs such as might have turned any one's head, but you be-hold me now-a complete, a hopeless wreck.

"Yes, I triumphed until the case of the State versus Joel Harkton came to me, It was my first capital case. Harkton was a well-known man of the city and an acquaintance of mine. His wife died suddenly under circumstances sufficiently suspicious to warrant his arrest. They were only circumstances, but very, very strong against him, and I saw that a conviction would be a laurel worthy trying for; especially as I knew that success meant my certain nomination for State Senator. Briefly and horribly. John, my ambition rose to madness. It trampled down my scruples against conviction on circumstantial evidence, and even the sympathy I had for Harkton as a close acquaintance. You will not, you cannot, understand me when I tell you that my ambition became-bloodthirsty. It set a mark-Harkton's life. You shrink, my friend, and it is right you should; but, be-fore high heaven, I swear it to be true that it was the external impulse --- a determination which could have been formed only in the deepest heart of Lucifer himself.

"Through day, and night after night, not stopping to sleep, I studied the circumstances until I had weighed, and pared, and shaped, and fitted them into a mosaic of conviction. If I thought of Harkton at at, it was only as the old high priest regarded the sacrificial lamb—as necessary to salvation. Triumph became my religion and my God

"One night"-acute recollection silenced the trembling voice for a few minutes-"I sat up in the old study, stringing the facts, for the hundredth time, upon a thread of prosecution. I was in a lever of elation. No possible defense could break down my theory of the wife-murderer. I already ciutched victory to my soul. I was oblivious to everything but the case; the hours, tolled from the steeple youder, struck upon my ear, but did not reach my brain. I reveled in a realization of victory, of the attainment of my cherished heights, and of triumph over the counsel for the defendant, who was my bitterest political opponent. Suddenly I was disturbed in my ecstacy by a slight noise, and, looking around, there within reach of my hand, quietly stood Joel Harkton. "For a moment I was chilled by the fear

that I was the victim of an ballucination, but the man's voice assured me of his material presence. "You are working to convict me,' was what he said, in mild reproach.

"'How did you come heref' I demanded "'I escaped from jatl, and crawled up over the roof there, foolishly, perhaps, to sak you to aid me in escape, instead of seeking my life, as you are doing. We have been friends, Moreland, and as surely as I talk to you new, I am innocent.'
"Innocent!' I repeated in scorn. You killed your wife in cold blood. The proof

is incontrovertible.' 'He shrank from me, holding up his hands in despairing realization of my bitterness and of his mistake in putting him-self into my power. I was furious at the mere prospect of defeat, and he must have seen it in my face. Harkton had never been a strong man, but he was now further weakened by imprisonment. I could easily detain him, and I argued that, as a public officer, sworn to see that the laws were vindicated, it was my duty to do so. So far the act I now tell you of was justified. but"-he paused, turning to me in a violent self-condemnation- 'in so far as my aspirathis man's life, the act was diabolical.

"'But you will surely let me go now, and give me the chance to escape,' Harkton said, weakly.
"No,' I hissed, rising: 'I will return you

"I grasped him. He simply said, God help me,' weakly, submissively, and the sound of those words have never ceased. He did not resist, and I threw him to the floor and tied his hands with a towel. Heaven pity me! those words, his piteous supplications-they ery in the wind tonight, and his eyes, in hopeless entreaty, glow yonder in the coals, "I will not detail how he was carried

back to jail, nor how I tried his case, n the praise I received. Alt I need say that I won, and Joel Harkton was-wa hanged for the murder of his wife."

The fire had sunk low, but it still shed light enough to show the terror reflected in his face by the point yet to be told. His

- march

his last words had been muffled, and he gripped the knobbed ends of the chair arms as a man, suspended over an abyss, would

clutch a support "Two months later," he presently resumed, "there came to me indisputable proof that Harkton was innocent, That night I sat late in my study-a night like this, with the wind fretting in the boughs and the leaves whispering to each other before they died. I sat at the table not studying, but fighting the remorse in my heart. I had received the nomination to the Senate, but my old aspirations were, like the leaves, whispering low in my soul

of their death. "Suddenly, by the indefinable perceppermitted me to look up. I caught the indistinct view one gets through the corner of the eye. Slowly, chilled by apprehen-sion, I turned my head, and there, just where Joel Harkton had stood on the night of his escape, I saw a hand extended toward me. Only a hand. I looked for the a hand, except that it protruded from a

ments; then, turning again to me, he said: "And that hand remained there, always reaching out to me. I braved it night after night, trying to study, to be my old self, to forget it when at my down-town office, but I could not. It became worse than the hand of a thief, who steals worldly goods; it stole my ardor, my ambition. It drove me here to this room, but, my friend, God help me! that hand is still up there, reaching out-daylight or dark-it is always, always reaching. The years have fled, and I have gone up there day and night, fascinated, tortured by the hope that it has been withdrawn; but it has always been there, and, heaven pity me-it is up there now-now. It is stealing away my life. It has been reached out to stay me in my upward career. Look at me -a wreck. My God, it is the hand of Joel

Harkton! He fell back in the chair overcome, and sprang up, in the fear that my friend was a victim of that terrible, almost incurable mental disorder-an ballucination.

"Philip," I mquired earnestly, "are you sure that it is not imagination? "Imagination!" he repeated, with increased terror; "you mean an hallucination. God help me if it is. I have thought of that. I believe an hallucination to be incurable. Let me tell you that my grandfather was tortured to his death by the vision of a rat. It is the iron law of heredity. I would rejoice, my friend, if I heredity. I would rejoice, my friend, if I mination fly across his face. For only a could only believe that this hand is that of moment he hesitated; then, walking fora spirit. Then it might be exercised. I am still young enough to achieve something; but that band grasps the very center of my life, and slowly, surely, it is compressing me to death. It attracts me to that room, an hallacination, and it will kill me." He reasoned thus more calmly than he had told the story, and I saw in this fact a hope for him. With sudden purpose I

"Philip, have you ever taken any one up "No," he replied, starting into a perception of my purpose; "if others can see it, it

is the hand of a spirit, and there may be found a way to drive it from me. Are you brave enough to go up there with me?" "I am." "Now?"

"At once." "Come, then," he said, rising.

The old mansion being only partially ocit, our footsteps echoing emptily through the wide halls, and jolting and jarring the weakened beams, the wind torturing the loosened casements and growling its uncanny glee in the huge chimneys. At the study door, before unlocking it, Philip turned to me, and, holding up the his existence. lamp, looked searchingly into my face. A rightful change had come over his own. his eyes were shiny and unsteady, and, for the first time, the chill of a thought far more terrible than of the ghostly hand flew over me—that my old friend was a madman. Realization of my position flashed upon me. I was in a lonely attic,

not see it, would be not turn upon me with the overpowering rage of a lunatic! Whatever his purpose in scrutinizing me, it seemed to be satisfied, and he said: "John, you take the lamp, open the door and walk in. I will wait for you here until you tell me if you see it. If I go in my eyes will be riveted upon it, and you will know then where it appears. Have

beyond earshot, with a maniac, I firmly believed the reaching band was a delusion. Should I tell h m so? If I told him I did

you courage? Without replying, I took the lamp, while he inserted the key and shoved the bolt. I turned the knob slowly, tremblingly, afraid of him as much as of what I might see in the room, and pushed open the door. The close, damp smell of an unused apartment rushed out as I stepped over the sill It was a small room, with ceiling slanting with the roof. In a moment I saw that it remained precisely as in the long past—a somewhat gloomy place at any time, but now rendered weird by Moreland's tale. knew that his two glaring eyes at the as, holding the lamp up, I looked about.
There were the bookshelves, the globe, the bust of Horace, the writing-table, but nowhere-keenly, eagerly, anxiously as looked, in the center, in every corner-did

see a hand. "Do you see it?" Philip called out. I hesitated, but I instantly reflected that could not deceive him. Before I could reply, however, he rushed excitedly, almost ferociously, in, snatched the lamp from my hand, and, catching my arm, pulled me to the table. Then, holding the light toward the end, he pointed with his long forefinger. But I saw nothing. Slowly his head turned around, and his gaze, fierce now, fell upon me.

"Don't you see it?"
"No, Philip," I answered, faintly, "I see "There, there," he almost screamed;

"right there -two inches from my fluger, a hand reaching out from a black spot in the air. There, there-a hand with a scar in "No. Philip," I said, "I do not see it." With a low moan he dropped the lamp upon the table, and sank upon his knees,

My God, my God! It is an hallucina-I was myself so agnated that I cannot tell bow I brought him down to his room. He was prostrated. His peculiarity, strengthened by the case of his grandfather, was to fear an hallucination more than a spirit hand, and I saw that this fear, now substantiated by my failure to see the vision, would soon torture him to death. In the desperate hope of saving him, I devoted myself to the study of apparitions, reading carefully the cases of Bernardotte. Earl Grey, Nicolai and many others. I was speedily convinced that Philip was the victim of a phantasm and knowing that the mental derangement had come to him in the way he had related and by heredity, I saw little hope of a cure. There was one chance, however, and I resolved to try it. I read that apparitions are sometimes driven away by natural means; thus, if it seems to the victim that the appari-

to believe that the purpose has been ac-I did not have to look very deep to find a plausible object for the reaching out of the hand. It had appeared on the night after Philip had learned that Harkton was inno-Remorse had struck deep into his heart. Naturally sensitive, as I knew him to be, his wish, torturingly helpless under the circumstances, would be for forgivemess-a shake of the hand of the whose ignominious and innodeath he had accomplished. He already believed it to be the hand of Joel Harkton. If he could be con-vinced that it was held out to him for no

tion comes for some purpose and he is made

revengeful purpose, but as a sign that the injured man was willing to forgive, my friend might be saved. Full of this idea, I hastened again to the old house and found Philip in the study, brooding again over the fire. It was a clear November Sunday night-the city resting from its labor-one of those nights of oppressive quiet, the earth, the stars and the thin crescent, low over the mountain, seeming to be calmly waiting.

With as calm and enatter-of-fact manner as I could force, I told Philip what I helieved to be the purpose of the hand. He sat, with his head wearily supported by his hand, and, when I had ended, he turned his face, wofully haggard, toward me, and

answered, despairingly:
"What would you have me do?" "Go up to the study and accept the offer of forgiveness that has been held out to you for fifteen years."

I was surprised at the effect. I thought it would be gladly received, but it startled him; his face grew more livid and it set head had taken upon his breast, so that | every nerve trembling. He looked at me |

some time before his quivering lips would form the words. "John, it is just fifteen years to-night since the hand appeared, but-but-

"But what?" "A fearful change has come over me. The hand attracted me before; but it is now horribly repulsive. Oh! I cannot go up now. It drew me there last night, at 2 o'clock, and as I looked upon it I shrank from it in new terror. It has grown old and withered, and it trembled as if the arm that held it were tired and it must soon drop. Oh, heaven pity me! what will come when it falls? I shall die."

I grasped his hands in my intense wish to calm and help him. I saw that his malady tion of the nerves. I became aware of a | had almost run its course, and that when presence in the room, and before my fright | this phantasy assumed the form of a drooping hand, he might, indeed, die. I pleaded with him to go with me once again, and finally he yielded. I took up the lamp, and when we reached

the study-door, Philip nervously unlocked it. The same musty closeness blew in my face. But it was not that which rooted me wrist, the arm, the form, but my sight to the spot-it was an impression, not went clear to the wall. It was nothing but received by sight, but by the perception of some other sense, that there round disk of blackness, as if thrust was, indeed, a presence in the gloomy through a sable cloth."

A shudder stopped him for a few mo- I followed Philip in, and, holding the light forward, I was struck into speechless awe; for there, indeed, as he had described it, I saw a hand protruding from a black sphere of air-a withered hand, as of an old man reaching out to grasp another, and trembling with the effort.

Had my days and nights of study over Philip's case affected my brain! Had I caught the dreadful mental disorder from him! Was I, too, the victim of an hallu-

cination? Philip turned to me, a spasm of agony writhing on his face. He gave one wild glance at my face, then, clutching me with terrible strength and intensity, he said, hoarsely:

"Yes," I answered, not above a whisper. "A hand?" "Yes, yes," I muttered. "A hand as you have described it." "Merciful heaven!" he cried; "it is not an apparition; it is, indeed, the hand of Joel

Harkton. His words brought me partially back to myself, and, reason returning, told me that my theory of forgiveness would apply now as well as before; that if it were, indeed, a spirit hand, this course might give it rest. "Philip," I said, in a voice forced into something like calmness, "the spirit of Joel Harkton wishes to forgive you. Reach forward and clasp the hand." I saw a look of desperate deter-

ward, he slowly reached out his hand, and I saw his fingers close with those of the reaching hand. Instantly the stillness of the night was broken by fluttering of the air and a cry often in the dead of the night. I teel it which seemed to recede rapidly into dis-pulling me there, and I cannot resist. It is tance and silence. My eyes, which had been riveted upon the reaching hand, now saw only empty space and pierced unob-structed to the wall. I turned to Philip, and found him lying dead upon the floor, but with an expression of relief and joy

> -H. M. Hoke, is the San Francisco Argonaut GRAY AND BUTLER.

A Westerner Discovers Where They Do Not Resemble Each Other. Kansas City Star General Butler, in that remarkable "book" of his, in recounting the history of his administration as Governor of Massachusetts, relates that having a Fast day proclamation to issue, a job not exactly in his line, he used a proclamation which, with the exception of a single paragraph, was the production of his predecessor. Governor Gore, in 1810. He thereby "sold' all Massachusetts, and raised one of those rows which are the joy and consolation of

The Hon. Isaac P. Gray when Governor of Indiana would have scorned to use another man's proclamation; in ail cases he used his own; emphatically his own, because he bought, and after some delay, paid for them. The "state papers," to which the title finally rested in Governor Gray, were various in character, and the prices paid having been published for the information of the public, afforded what has long been needed, a sort of tariff for the guidance of literary men and others who may have occasion to sell Governors goods in their line. It appears that for the Grant proclamation on the oceasion of the death of that great soldier, Governor Gray paid Editor G. B. Maynard, of the Indianapolis Sentinel, \$10. This sum may then be counted as a fair average price for proclamations, where some eloquence and pathos are thrown in. For a letter to the Tammany society Gov-ernor Gray paid Editor Maynard \$10, which seems rather low, when the shock to the writer's feelings in having, even indirectly, anything to do with such a crowd is con-sidered. For two addresses, one on Robert Emmett, and the other on Robert Burns, the contract price was \$50 each, which may be taken as the ruling price of addresses on subjects about which every man of ordinary reading and intelligence is supposed to

know something. The prices as here given will serve as a standard for writers, but the figures should be understood as cash. Where the writers are compelled to wait, and finally to collect their money under a threat to make the Governor or other contracting party "bleat" if he does not settle, as was the case in the matter of account between Governor Gray and Editor Maynard, there should be an advance on these figures. Governor Gray, who has in stock all this valuable literary property, and so will not have to buy it again, has been mentioned, probably for that reason, as a candidate for President of the United States.

An Independent Opinion.

That Benjamin Harrison will be renomi-nated for President is about as sure as anything can be in the domain of politics. No thing can be in the domain of politics. No better luck could befall Mr. Harrison than the nomination by the Democrats of David B. Hill. With Harrison and Hill pitted against one another for the great office of President of the United States, the question before the people will be: Shall morality and political decency as represented by Benjamin Harrison win, or shall immorality and political indecency as represented by David B. Hill? In the event of such a contest, every independent ought to thrust into the background for the time being all consideration of political issues dividing consideration of political issues dividing the parties, and cast his vote for Mr. Har-rison, in order to save the honor of his



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